

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Sept. 19, 2003

For immediate release

1. **Beach advisory removed at Lake of Three Fires; Pine Lake and Geode to be re-sampled**
2. **Public invited to discuss beach bacteria levels at meetings**
3. **Two more fish kills reported to DNR this week**

BEACH ADVISORY REMOVED AT LAKE OF THREE FIRES; PINE LAKE AND GEODE TO BE RESAMPLED

DES MOINES — The swimming advisory posted at Lake of Three Fires beach in Taylor County has been removed. E. coli levels were elevated at Pine Lake beach in Hardin County and Geode beach in Henry County, so both will be re-sampled next week.

The beach at Lake of Three Fires had an E. coli count of 40 this week, so the advisory has been removed.

The beaches at Pine Lake and Geode had E. coli counts of 600 and 2,100 respectively. These are both above the one-time standard of 235 and will be re-sampled since neither lake has had a history of bacteria problems in the past. If the re-sample results remain high, advisories will be posted.

Bacteria levels at beaches typically rise as a result of runoff from rainfall and can return to normal in less than two days with sunny conditions. Samples are collected from the beaches on Monday and Tuesday. There was widespread rain over much of Iowa in the last week likely elevating bacteria levels at some locations.

Bacteria levels at Iowa's 34 other state park beaches are within acceptable levels.

The DNR is also advising normal precautions for contact with any surface water in Iowa:

- Avoid swallowing the water
- Avoid the water if you have open cuts or wounds that could become infected by contact with bacteria

- Swimming is not recommended for persons who are very young or very old and may have problems avoiding ingestion of water, and people who have weakened immune systems due to other medical conditions.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR's website every Friday afternoon at <http://www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html>

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Janice Boekhoff, 319-335-1574.

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PUBLIC INVITED TO DISCUSS BEACH BACTERIA LEVELS AT MEETINGS

DES MOINES — Iowans are invited to three public meetings to discuss state park beach monitoring results at Lake Darling, Backbone and Geode state parks.

The meetings will include a 30-minute presentation explaining bacteria results and a chance to ask DNR Iowa Geological Survey staff questions.

“We’d like the public to get involved with understanding bacteria and making changes in the watersheds that affect the beaches,” said Janice Boekhoff, research geologist with the Iowa Geological Survey. “Many people have an image of bacteria as scary and unchanging. In reality, bacteria sources vary. So bacteria levels in the water are always changing, like the weather.”

The meeting locations are as follows:

- Wednesday, Oct. 8: Brighton Community Center (City Hall), 117 W. Washington St., Brighton; discussing Lake Darling State Park
- Wednesday, Oct. 15: Franklin Hotel, 102 Elkader St., Strawberry Point; discussing Backbone State Park
- Wednesday, Oct. 22: Danville Community Building, 104 W. Shepherd St., Danville; discussing Geode State Park

All meetings begin at 7 p.m.

The Lake Darling meeting will also include a discussion on the Lake Darling Bacteria Source-Tracking Project currently underway in the watershed.

The DNR tests bacteria levels at Iowa's 37 state park beaches weekly and posts results on Fridays at <http://www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html>.

For more information, contact Janice Boekhoff at 319-335-1574.

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TWO MORE FISH KILLS REPORTED TO DNR THIS WEEK

DES MOINES – Two additional fish kills, one in northwest Iowa and one in southwest Iowa, brought the total to seven fish kills under investigation by the DNR this week.

“Unfortunately people called in most of these two or more days after the fish died, which in most cases is too late for us to be able to track down a definite source of pollution,” said Barb Lynch, chief of DNR’s field services bureau.

Lynch urged people to call their local DNR field office during normal working hours, and to call the 24-hour state spill line at 515-281-8694 after hours whenever dead fish are found or a hazardous substance is spilled.

About 1500 dead carp and carpsuckers were found Sunday in an oxbow of Dry Creek near Hawarden in Sioux County. The kill was not reported to the DNR until Thursday.

“Dissolved oxygen levels in the oxbow were high, ammonia was low and the dead carp were lying in the mud; so it appears that the fish swam into the oxbow following heavy rainfall last week, then were isolated as creek levels dropped,” said Ken Hessenius, supervisor of the Spencer DNR field office.

A second fish kill was observed Sunday in Guthrie County on Mosquito Creek about three miles southeast of Bagley, but was not reported to the DNR until Tuesday. DNR investigators found elevated ammonia levels in several locations and about 50 decaying fish, but were unable to locate a single source of the ammonia.

Similar results were found for the fish kills investigated earlier in the week along the west branch of the Floyd River in Sioux County near Maurice, Willow Creek in Sioux County near Granville, the Floyd River near Hospers in Sioux County and Coal Creek near What Cheer in Keokuk County.

DNR investigators found that a fish kill on Mud Creek near Doon in Lyon County was limited to one pool on the creek, where localized construction may have contributed to the problem.

Hessenius cautioned that stream levels are at very low levels after prolonged drought conditions. When that happens, fish are more likely to be stressed and very little contamination can cause a fish kill.

"Unless we can get on the scene as the fish kill is occurring or very soon afterwards, it is often times very hard for us to identify a source because most of the evidence in the stream is gone by the time we get there," said Hessenius.

The DNR field office phone numbers are:

Northeast Iowa, Manchester, 563-927-2640
North Central Iowa, Mason City, 641-424-4073
Northwest Iowa, Spencer, 712-262-4177
Southwest Iowa, Atlantic, 712-243-1934
South Central Iowa, Des Moines, 515-725-0268
Southeast Iowa, Washington, 319-653-2135.

For more information, contact Karen Grimes at (515) 281-5135 or Ken Hessenius at 712-262-4177 or Holly Andersen at 712-243-1934 in Atlantic.